

Report of Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Report to Executive Board

Date: 12th December 2012

Subject: Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*)

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Originating in the far east, where it exists harmlessly amongst the oriental ash population, ash dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) was identified in eastern Europe during the early 1990's and spread rapidly through central and western Europe.
2. In late October 2012, ash dieback was found in the wild ash population in East Anglia. It is thought that this infection may be the result of wind blown spores from the continent. This suggests that the fungus may have been present in the UK for a number of years.
3. In Leeds ash trees represent a considerable proportion of native woodland cover (as much as 1/3 in some areas). Identification of the disease in LCC owned young plantations (potentially those planted within the past 5 years) will mean that potentially all the ash trees present will have to be destroyed. There is also the potential that ornamental plantings in formal parks, cemeteries and urban green space planted in the last 5 years may also be affected.
4. Identification of the disease within our natural and mature ash population, may lead to an instruction for the Council to fell and burn all infected trees on site. There will be a need to assess the potential risk that dead trees present to people and property and to implement the necessary mitigation (it may take several years for large mature trees to succumb to the disease).

Recommendations

5. Executive Board are recommended to note the contents of the above report.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report outlines the background to ash dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) and the potential impact of the spread of this disease in Leeds.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Originating in the far east, where it exists harmlessly amongst the oriental ash population, ash dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) was identified in eastern Europe during the early 1990's and spread rapidly through central and western Europe. It is an aggressive fungal pathogen, with the potential to kill 90% of European native ash populations – as highlighted by the devastating effect it has had on the Danish ash population.
- 2.2 Ash dieback was first discovered in the UK in March 2012 in a consignment of young trees imported from the Netherlands to a Buckinghamshire nursery. Since then it has been discovered on a variety of sites throughout England, plus a site west of Glasgow, all planted with imported nursery stock during the past 5 years.
- 2.1 In late October 2012, ash dieback was found in the wild ash population in East Anglia. It is thought that this infection may be the result of wind blown spores from the continent. This suggests that the fungus may have been present in the UK for a number of years.
- 2.2 As well as affecting young, recently planted trees originating from imported nursery stocks, in nurseries, ash dieback poses a clear risk to our native forest trees, plus trees in urban settings, such as in parks and gardens and along road verges.
- 2.3 Forestry Commission staff and officers from the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) are focused upon assessing the spread of the disease in the UK. As at 7th November, the disease has been confirmed in 115 sites: 15 nurseries, 39 planting sites and 61 locations in the wider environment (forests and woodland).
- 2.4 Where ash dieback is confirmed, the Forestry Commission uses its statutory powers to order land owners to up root or fell infected trees and destroy them on site. No movement of ash trees away from infected sites is allowed. The sanitation of infected sites must be undertaken within a strict timeframe and at a landowners own expense.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 In Leeds ash trees represent a considerable proportion of native woodland cover (as much as 1/3 in some areas). Identification of the disease in LCC owned young plantations (potentially those planted within the past 5 years) will mean that potentially all the ash trees present will have to be destroyed. This will include plantations at Temple Newsam, East Ardsley, Leeds New Forest Village and Water Haigh Park (Woodlesford). There is also the potential that ornamental plantings in formal parks, cemeteries and urban green space planted in the last 5 years may also be affected.

- 3.2 Identification of the disease within our natural and mature ash population, may lead to an instruction for the Council to fell and burn all infected trees on site. However, it may be too late at this stage for such action to have any positive effects on the ash population at large. Nonetheless, there will be a need to assess the potential risk that dead trees present to people and property and to implement the necessary mitigation (it may take several years for large mature trees to succumb to the disease).
- 3.3 In the Yorkshire and Humber area, as at 7th November the Forestry Commission have reported 8 cases on newly planted sites or nurseries, and 3 cases in the wild population. Appendix 1 provides a map of the UK and identifies confirmed infection sites. A newly planted privately owned site in north Leeds is known to be infected (no details as yet), and is under quarantine. There have been no positive identification of ash dieback anywhere else in Leeds.
- 3.4 Parks and Countryside forestry staff are actively monitoring young plantations and keeping in close contact with the Forestry Commission to keep up to date with the latest information and recommended action. All staff in the service are being briefed on how to spot the disease as well as highways inspectors and ALMO tenant management officers. In addition the contact centre have been briefed to respond to calls from the public on this matter, and advice will be published on the Council website.
- 3.5 Parks and Countryside have placed a ban on planting of any ash trees until further notice, and will be advising other agencies in Leeds to do the same. The situation remains fluid and the service will be responding to Government instructions and guidance as the situation develops.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.6 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.6.1 There is ongoing liaison and engagement with the Forestry Commission as the situation develops, along with neighbouring local authorities, the Royal Forestry Society (who represent private estate owners) and relevant non-governmental organisations such as Groundwork, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and the Woodlands Trust.

4.7 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.7.1 An equality screening document has been completed, and is included as Appendix A, from which it is not necessary to complete a full equality and diversity / cohesion and integration impact assessment.

4.8 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.8.1 This issue could potentially affect various Council policies and strategies relevant to the environment.

4.9 Resources and value for money

- 4.9.1 Currently, tree management budgets focus on the management of identified risks. The potential for a rapid increase in dead trees in high usage areas (bordering highways and residential areas for example), may create an additional pressure on existing budgets.
- 4.9.2 The potential cost of sanitation felling is likely to be significant, with a cost of £1,000 per mature tree incurred to dismantle/fell and burn on site.
- 4.9.3 At present there is no additional funding available from central government to address this issue. The Department will enter into discussion with the Forestry Commission, DEFRA, and the LEA regarding the financial implications as the situation develops.

4.10 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.10.1 The Forestry Commission have statutory powers to enforce the Council to take action as instructed.

4.11 Risk Management

- 4.11.1 In Leeds ash trees represent a considerable proportion of native woodland cover (as much as 1/3 in some areas). Identification of the disease in LCC owned young plantations (potentially those planted within the past 5 years) will mean that potentially all the ash trees present will have to be destroyed. There is also the potential that ornamental plantings in formal parks, cemeteries and urban green space planted in the last 5 years may also be affected. Identification of the disease within our natural and mature ash population, may lead to an instruction for the Council to fell and burn all infected trees on site.
- 4.11.2 There may be wider implications to biodiversity.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Executive Board are recommended to note the contents of the above report.

6 Background documents¹

- 6.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Appendix A: Equality Screening Document

Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions. Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Environment and Neighbourhoods	Service area: Parks and Countryside
Lead person: Simon Frosdick	Contact number: 3957400

1. Title: Ash Dieback (<i>Chalara fraxinea</i>) Report to Executive Board, 12 th December 2012
Is this a: <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other
If other, please specify Briefing report to Executive Board.

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
This screening examines the contents of a report to Executive Board on the rapidly developing situation surrounding the Ash Dieback (<i>Chalara fraxinea</i>) outbreak.

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?		X
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?	X	
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	X	
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		X
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment• Advancing equality of opportunity• Fostering good relations		X

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration	
If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.	
Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration? (think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected) <p>There will be no particular effects on any identified groups or individuals beyond those that effect all residents and organisations. Our response to the outbreak will be directed by central government using existing powers to direct land-owners to take specific action. The council will have limited discretion in how this develops.</p> <p>Information will be made available via the councils website and scripts will be prepared for contact centre staff. Key stakeholders and non-governmental organisations are being kept informed via existing communication channels.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key findings (think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another) <p>There are no identified actions required.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions (think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact) <p>There are no identified actions required.</p>	

5. If you are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you will need to carry out an impact assessment.	
Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	
Date to complete your impact assessment	
Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	

6. Governance, ownership and approval Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening		
Name	Job title	Date
S Frosdick	Business Development Manager	Thursday, 08 November 2012

7. Publishing This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If you are not carrying out an independent impact assessment the screening document will need to be published. Please send a copy to the Equality Team for publishing	
Date screening completed	Thursday, 08 November 2012
Date sent to Equality Team	
Date published (To be completed by the Equality Team)	